

For Immediate Release

Contact: Erica Daughtrey

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*Washington, D.C.*- Today, Congressman Sires joined his colleagues in the House of Representatives in passing H.R. 3221, the Student Aid and Fiscal Responsibility Act of 2009 by a vote of 253 - 171. This bill provides affordable, high-quality Federal student loans for all families, prepares students for 21st century jobs and ensures that the next generation of children enter kindergarten with the skills they need to succeed in school.

“This legislation will open the door for more children in New Jersey—and across the nation—to achieve the dream of a college education,” said Congressman Sires. “By changing the way our student loan programs are structured, this bill will finally break down a major barrier to college education: affordability.”

Over the next 10 years, H.R. 3221 will invest more than \$796.5 million in New Jersey and \$127.6 million in the 13th district to increase the maximum Pell Grant scholarship and strengthen and expand the Perkins Loan program. This bill will increase funding for the College Access Challenge Grant program and bolster college access and completion support programs for students, resulting in at least \$2.4 million a year for the next five years in New Jersey.

In order to ensure that New Jersey’s students and workers have the skills and resources necessary for 21st century jobs, H.R. 3221 encourages instructive partnerships between community colleges, businesses, job training and adult education programs. Additionally, New Jersey will receive nearly \$69.1 million to finance projects to ensure that community college students can learn in state-of-the-art facilities.

This legislation also aims to provide more children from low-income families in New Jersey with the skills necessary to succeed in kindergarten by reforming state standards and practices for early learning programs. Additionally, New Jersey will receive more than \$72.9 million to provide school districts with school modernization and improved learning environments.

“As a former teacher, I know how crucial education is to the success of New Jersey,” said Congressman Sires. “This legislation will provide New Jersey with the financial and structural tools to help improve access to college. Enabling our students to graduate with a better education and less debt ensures that the American workforce remains highly skilled, competitive and ready to rebuild the fiscal health of our state and country.”

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